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ART. II. — *Lettres Inédites de VOLTAIRE. Recueillies par M. DE CAYROL, et annotées par M. ALPHONSE FRANÇOIS. Précedées d'une Préface de M. SAINT-MARC GIRARDIN, de l'Académie Française.* Paris. 1856. 2 vols. 8vo.

ON the 28th of March, 1727, the remains of Sir Isaac Newton lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber in London. Statesmen, nobles, and philosophers gathered there to pay the last homage to a man whose sole claim to distinction was that he had enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge. When the body was carried to its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey, the pall was borne by the Lord Chancellor, the highest official in the kingdom; by the Duke of Montrose and the Duke of Roxburgh; by the Earls of Pembroke, Sussex, and Macclesfield,—members of the Royal Society, of which Newton had been President for nearly a quarter of a century. The funeral was attended by a concourse of the men highest in rank and greatest in name in England, and its solemn pageantry was witnessed by a multitude of citizens who understood little, it is true, of what Newton had done for them and their posterity, but who felt, in some degree, how becoming it was in men great by accident to pay such honors to a man great by nature.

There were two poets then in London upon whom this scene, so honorable to England and to human nature, made a profound impression. One of these was James Thomson, whose *Seasons* were then in course of publication, with the applause which six generations have ratified. In his poem upon the death of Newton, he expresses the feeling that in honoring *him* England redeemed herself:—

“For, though depraved and sunk, she brought thee forth,
And glories in thy name; she points thee out
To all her sons, and bids them eye thy star,
While, in expectance of the second life,
When time shall be no more, thy sacred dust
Sleeps with her kings, and dignifies the scene.”

The other poet was Voltaire, then in exile in England, after his second imprisonment in the Bastille. What a lasting impression was made upon his susceptible mind by Newton's

stately funeral, the numerous allusions to it in his letters attest. In extreme old age, his eye would kindle and his countenance light up when he spoke of his once having lived in a land where a professor of mathematics, only because he was great in his vocation, could be buried in a temple where the ashes of kings reposed, and the highest subjects in the kingdom feel it an honor to assist in bearing thither his body.

Voltaire had more reason than the poet of the Seasons to feel the significance of such an event. He had had cause to know that in France nothing was really held sacred but hereditary rank. He was then thirty-one years of age. As yet he had written nothing that savored of immorality or impiety. Except some youthful indiscretions, which his countrymen were the last people in the world to judge with severity, he had done nothing to tarnish his name. Without assuming to compare himself, in any point, with the great philosopher of England, he could yet justly claim to represent the intellectual interests of France. He was the author of three successful plays, at a time when the production of a successful play was considered the highest achievement of genius. He had written a poem, *La Henriade*, which France appeared willing to rank with the great epics of antiquity. His success had produced a kind of sham revival of letters at Paris. "I have brought poetry into fashion," he writes in his gay, extravagant manner; "all the world is writing poems." His young king had given him a pension of two thousand francs, and the queen another of fifteen hundred. Princes had courted his society. He had been received well at court during the festivities at the marriage of Louis XV. "The queen," he wrote, "has wept at *Mariamne*; she has laughed at *L'Indiscret*; she speaks to me often; she calls me 'my poor Voltaire.' " In every way then known, France had hailed this new poet with welcome; his position in France for ten years, both as a citizen and a man of letters, had been high. Nevertheless, against the merest caprice, or the vaguest suspicion of a man of rank, neither the dignity of his calling nor his rights as a citizen had availed him aught. Twice he had been exiled from Paris because he was the friend of a nobleman out of favor at court. Again, because he was suspected (falsely) of having written some verses reflecting upon the government,

he was imprisoned in the Bastille for eleven months. His favorite work, *La Henriade*, written to celebrate the glory of an ancestor of his king, he was obliged to publish by stealth in a foreign country, because the capricious and inconsistent tyranny of the government refused to sanction its appearance in France. And now, as he stood looking upon the funeral cortege of the English philosopher, the recollection of a more recent outrage, one so vile that it has no parallel in the history of literature, was rankling in his bosom, and giving him the keenest sense of the meaning of what he beheld.

The incident which consigned Voltaire a second time to the Bastille has never, we believe, been told correctly in English. He was dining one day at the Duc de Sully's, with whom he was in great intimacy. Another of the guests was the Chevalier de Rohan, cousin of the host, a dull and debauched, a sordid and malignant member of one of the most powerful families in France. In the vivacity of conversation, Voltaire presumed to differ in opinion from this personage, who was often a lord among wits, but never a wit among lords, and whose presence weighed heavily upon the company. "Who is this young man," asked De Rohan, "who, in contradicting me, speaks so loud?" Voltaire, with flashing eye, replied: "Monsieur le Duc! he is a man who does not drag about with him a great name, but who honors the name he bears." The Chevalier rose from the table and left the house. The guests openly applauded the poet; and the Duc de Sully himself said aloud, "We are glad if you have rid us of him." A week after, as Voltaire was dining again with the Duc de Sully, a message was brought to him that some one wished to speak with him in the street below. He endeavored to excuse himself. "It is to do a good work that you are sought," said the messenger. Voltaire rose at these words, and, napkin in hand, descended to the gate of the mansion, where he observed a carriage and a hackney-coach standing. Approaching the door of the coach, a dolorous voice from within asked him to mount upon the step. At the moment of his complying with this request, he was seized by a strong hand, and held firmly by his coat. Two or three ruffians (ham-string cutters Voltaire calls them) sprang from the other vehicle, one of whom gave him five or six strokes

over the shoulders with a cane. A voice from the private carriage then cried, "Enough!" the poet was released, and the vehicles drove rapidly away. The voice that cried "Enough!" was that of the Chevalier de Rohan. It was in broad daylight, in the streets of Paris, in the summer of 1725, that this deed was done.

Voltaire, his clothes torn and disarranged, but not in a fury of passion (for it was only little things that put him in a fury), ascended to the company, related what had occurred, and called upon the Duc de Sully to resent this outrage committed upon one of his guests as done to himself. He asked him to go with him at once to a magistrate, and join him in a statement of the facts. The Duc de Sully, who had known and caressed Voltaire for six years, whose dinners and suppers Voltaire for six years had distinguished and enlivened, chose to win an immortality of shame by refusing to take any part against his noble cousin. The poet knew his world too well to hope for justice from the laws, unless his demand were supported by a man of rank. He retired to the country, engaged a fencing-master, and studied English. In the spring of 1726, he reappeared in Paris. One evening, accompanied by a single friend, he went to the theatre and entered the box of the Chevalier de Rohan. "Sir," said he to that valiant nobleman, "if some affair of interest has not made you forget the outrage of which I have to complain, I hope you will give me satisfaction for it." The Chevalier accepted the challenge at once, and himself named the time and place of meeting, — nine the next morning, at St. Anthony's Gate. He however immediately made known the nature of the interview to his family. Some of his relatives complained to the Duc de Bourbon, then Prime Minister, and, what was far more dangerous, enlisted in their cause the Minister's mistress by showing her some satirical verses upon herself which they pretended Voltaire had written. One of them afterwards declared that the reason of their interference was that De Rohan was suffering from the effects of a fall, and was unfit for an encounter in the field.

Now it appears that, in challenging De Rohan, Voltaire had broken an edict of the king, which forbade a commoner to challenge a nobleman. Voltaire's father held an office of

about the grade of first auditor of our treasury, and possessed an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year. Voltaire himself kept three servants, enjoyed considerable revenue, lived in the best society, and had a European celebrity. Nevertheless, the De Rohans stooped to avail themselves of the royal edict. They further alleged, that Voltaire, in his search after the Chevalier, had dared to invade the sacred domicile of the Cardinal de Rohan. The next morning, instead of meeting the Chevalier at the rendezvous, Voltaire encountered the officers of the police, armed with a *lettre de cachet*, which consigned him to the Bastille.

We have the brief remonstrance which the poet sent to the Minister of Police on this occasion: "I represent, very humbly, that I was assailed by the brave Chevalier de Rohan, assisted by six ruffians, behind whom he was boldly posted. Since that time, I have sought continually to repair, not my honor, but his, — a thing too difficult. If I went to Versailles, it is wholly false that I sought the Chevalier de Rohan at the house of the Cardinal de Rohan."

He was confined in the Bastille for thirty-two days. He was then released, on condition that he should leave France immediately, and not return without the king's permission. Such was the kind of justice meted out to men of letters under Louis XV. Such were the recollections which the spectacle of the honors paid to Newton revived in the mind of Voltaire.

The volumes named at the head of this article add about thirteen hundred letters to the six thousand four hundred which the public already possessed from Voltaire's indefatigable hand. He was the most laborious man of letters that ever lived. Besides the seventy volumes of his works, we have an average of more than two letters for each week of his public life of sixty-six years; and even as we write comes notice of a new series of letters just discovered in Germany. The entire Voltaire correspondence, including the letters addressed to him as well as those written by him, comprises the astonishing number of ten thousand letters, of which about eight thousand were written or dictated by himself. This correspondence fills thirty volumes octavo, all annotated and indexed. The new volumes are chiefly interesting from the light they throw upon

the least known and most important part of Voltaire's life,—his two years' residence in England. They contain, among other curious things, twenty-two letters written by him in the English language. With the aid of this new collection, we can now give a tolerably connected account of his life in England, of the company he kept there, the work he did, and the influences he imbibed. The importance of this part of his life has, perhaps, not been sufficiently noted. It was in England that Voltaire lighted the torch with which he set the world on fire. If he had never seen England, he would never have been the Voltaire we know him now. His works and letters bear us out in the assertion, that the principal employment of the last forty years of his life was to impart to France what England taught him. *That* was the new wine which burst the rotten old bottle of the French monarchy.

On the 1st of May, 1726, Voltaire sat in his room in the Bastille. The order for his release and expatriation had arrived, and he was writing letters to his friends, several of which are preserved. To one he wrote, asking her to come and see him, "perhaps for the last time"; to another, requesting the loan of a travelling carriage; to others, ordinary notes of farewell. The Bastille was not a place of horror to such prisoners as he. He may not, like Marmontel, have been furnished with a dinner of five courses from the Governor's own table, with a bottle of excellent claret, and another dinner of three courses for his servant, with a bottle of *vin ordinaire*, but he had a comfortable apartment, in which his literary labors were assiduously continued, and in which he entertained daily at dinner his sometime fellow-clerk and lifelong friend, Thieriot. The government of France was, even then, a government of mistresses. A man might be consigned to the Bastille to appease the wounded vanity of a woman, and yet have friends in the ministry who could convert his dungeon into a scene of luxury, maintained at the king's expense. Only a hint to the Governor of the Bastille was needed.

Let us look in upon Voltaire for a moment, before sending him into exile. This man, whom Goethe styles the most French of Frenchmen, was strikingly French in person and manners. His height, as he himself records, was five feet six

inches,—about the average stature of the French army. He makes merry, in his letters, with the slenderness of his figure and the meagreness of his countenance. He speaks of himself as a “dried herring”; and once, when he had said, “I hope soon to see you face to face,” he added, “that is, if I may apply the word *face* to such a phiz as mine.” But his portraits, which may still be collected by the hundred, do not justify this description. They show us a forehead broad and high, but not prominent; a large, long nose, a powerful under jaw, and somewhat prominent cheek-bones,—a countenance which would certainly present a very gaunt appearance if it were emaciated. It was far from being a handsome face; but his associates tell us, that, in these years, the wonderful brightness of his dark eyes and his luxuriant brown hair atoned for its deficiencies, and rendered his countenance striking and attractive. His figure, too, was erect and agile. Though he would pass in a crowd merely for a “little Frenchman,” yet in a room full of fine company he was not an ordinary-looking nor an unprepossessing person, and his manners had all the vivacious grace of his nation and its court. Goldsmith, who says he saw him many years later, observes that, “when he was warmed in discourse, and had got over a hesitating manner which sometimes he was subject to, it was rapture to hear him. His meagre visage seemed insensibly to gather beauty; every muscle in it had meaning, and his eye beamed with unusual brightness.” Frederic the Great wrote to him, *after* their quarrel: “You are charming in conversation; you know how to instruct and amuse at the same time. You are the most seductive spirit that I know, capable of making all the world love you when you wish it. Such are the graces of your soul that you can at once offend those who know you, and deserve their indulgence. Indeed, you would be perfect if you were not a man.” This power to please stood him in good stead in a country that cherished an hereditary contempt for Frenchmen. It was in 1721 that Aaron Hill, in speaking of a company of French comedians playing in London, styled them “the French vermin.”

On the 2d of May, Voltaire left the Bastille. On the 6th, he was at Calais, domiciled with M. Dunoquet, paymaster of the

king's troops, to whom he had been recommended by a lady of rank, — one of his fellow-prisoners in the Bastille. "We were like Pyramus and Thisbe," he wrote to this lady from Calais, — "separated from each other by a wall; only we did not kiss through a chink." A few days after, he crossed the Channel and sailed up the Thames as far as Greenwich, four miles below London, where he landed.

It was one of the most beautiful days of May. The sky, he records, was without a cloud, and a soft breeze from the west tempered the sun's heat and disposed all hearts to joy. It chanced, also, to be the day of the great Greenwich Fair, which was then a day of festivity to Londoners, who came in crowds to witness games, races, and regattas. The river was covered, he says, with two rows of merchant-ships for the space of six miles, with their sails all spread to do honor to the king and queen, who were upon the river in a gilded barge, preceded by boats with bands of music, and followed by a thousand wherries, each rowed by two men in breeches and doublet, with large silver plates upon their shoulders. "There was not one of these oarsmen," remarks the stranger, "who did not assure me by his face, his dress, and his excellent condition (*embonpoint*) that he was a freeman and lived in plenty."

Near the river, in the famous Greenwich Park, four miles in circumference, he observed a prodigious number of well-formed young people on horseback cantering around a race-course marked with white posts. Among them were women, who galloped up and down with much grace. But he was especially pleased with the girls on foot, most of whom were clad in Indian stuffs. Many of them were beautiful; all were well made; and there was a neatness in their dress, a vivacity in their movements, and an air of satisfaction in their faces, that made them all pleasing. Roaming about the Park, he came to a smaller race-course, not more than five hundred feet long. "What is this for?" he asked. He was told that this was for a foot-race, while the larger course was for horses. Near one of the posts of the large circle was a man on horseback holding in his hand a silver pitcher, and at the end of the smaller course were two poles, with a large hat at the top of one, and a chemise floating like a flag from the other. Be-

tween the two poles stood a stout man holding a purse. The pitcher, he learned, was the prize for the horse-race, and the purse for the foot-race. But what of the hat and the chemise? He was "agreeably surprised" to be told that there was to be a race by the girls, and that the winner was to receive, besides the purse, the chemise "as a mark of honor," while the winning man was to have the hat.

Continuing his rambles, he had the good fortune to fall in with some English merchants to whom he had letters of introduction. These gentlemen, he says, did the honors of the festival with the eagerness and the cordiality of men who are happy themselves and wish to make others sharers in their joy. They had a horse brought for him; they sent for refreshments; and took care to get him a place whence he could comfortably view the races, the river, and London in the distance. At first, he thought himself transported to the Olympic Games; but when he beheld the beauty of the Thames, the fleets of ships, the immensity of London, he "blushed to have compared Greece with England." Some one told him that at that very moment there was a "combat of gladiators" in progress at London; and then he thought he was with the ancient Romans. Near him on the stand was a Danish courier, who had only arrived that morning, and was to set out on his return in the evening. "He appeared to me," says Voltaire, "overcome with joy and wonder. He believed that this nation was always gay, that the women were all beautiful and animated, that the sky of England was always clear and serene, that people there thought only of pleasure, and that every day in the year was like this. He went away without being undeceived. For my part, I was more enchanted even than my Dane."

Such were Voltaire's first hours in England. Ben Franklin was a journeyman printer in London then. What more likely than that he was at Greenwich that day? He may have brushed past the eager little Frenchman whom he was to meet in such singular circumstances fifty-two years after. He may have been one of the stout, well-dressed, fresh-complexioned youths whom Voltaire admired that day galloping about in the Park; for at Greenwich Fair many young fellows rode who trudged the rest of the year on foot.

Voltaire was not long in learning that England was not always clad in smiles. He was in London the same evening, probably at the house of his friend Lord Bolingbroke, which was usually the place of his abode in London, and to which his letters from France were always addressed. He had become acquainted with that fascinating nobleman four years before, when he was an exile in France, and was paying his court to Madame de Villette, whom he afterwards married. Bolingbroke, always a favorite with men of letters, won the heart of the French poet. After spending a day with him in 1722, Voltaire wrote to one of his friends: "You must share my enchantment. I have found in this illustrious Englishman all the learning of his own country, and all the politeness of ours. I have never heard our language spoken with more energy and exactness. This man, who has been all his life immersed in pleasure and business, has found the means of learning everything and retaining everything. He knows the history of the ancient Egyptians like that of England. He is as familiar with Virgil as with Milton. . . . Both he and Madame de Villette were infinitely pleased with my poem (*La Henriade*). In the enthusiasm of their approbation, they placed it above all the poems that have appeared in France; but I know how much I ought to abate of their extravagant applause." The next year Bolingbroke was permitted to return to England and to repossess his estates. "He will be in Paris to-day," wrote Voltaire, "and I shall have the grief to bid him farewell, perhaps, forever."

In 1726, they had changed parts. Bolingbroke was at home, living in affluence and honor. Voltaire was an exile, deprived of his pensions and his *rentes*. Lord Bolingbroke made him welcome at his house, and obtained entrance for him to the best Tory houses in England.

In the course of his first evening in London, as Voltaire relates in the letter quoted above, he met some ladies of fashion. He spoke to them of the "ravishing spectacle" which he had witnessed at Greenwich, not doubting that they also had witnessed it, and had formed part of the gay assemblage of ladies galloping round the course. He was a little surprised, however, to observe that they had not that air of vivacity which

people usually exhibit who have just returned from a day's pleasure. On the contrary, they were constrained and reserved, sipped their tea, made a great noise with their fans, talked scandal, played cards, or read the newspaper. At length, one of these fine ladies, "more charitable than the rest," informed the puzzled foreigner that people of fashion never abased themselves so far as to attend miscellaneous gatherings like the one which had given him so much delight; that all those pretty girls, clad in the fabrics of India, were only servants and villagers; that those handsome young men, so well mounted, and cantering so gayly in the Park, were nothing but scholars and apprentices on hired horses. These unexpected statements he could not believe, and he felt himself moved to anger against the lady who made them.

Bent on pursuing his investigations into the character of this strange people, he went the next day into the city, to find the merchants and aldermen who had been so cordial to him at his "supposed Olympic Games." In a coffee-house which was dirty, ill-furnished, badly served, and dimly lighted, he found most of those gentlemen who, on the afternoon before, had been so affable and good-humored. Not a man of them recognized him. He ventured to address a remark to some of them. They either made no reply at all, or else merely answered yes or no. He imagined he must have offended them. He tried to remember if he had rated the fabrics of Lyons above theirs, if he had said that the French cooks were better than the English, if he had intimated that Paris was a more agreeable city than London, if he had hinted that time passed more pleasantly at Versailles than at St. James's, or if he had been guilty of any other enormity of that kind. No, his conscience acquitted him of all guilt. At length, "with an air of vivacity that appeared very strange to them," he took the liberty of asking one of them why they were all so melancholy. The prospect of being able to "chaff" a Frenchman appears to have put a little animation into this group of silent Britons. One of them replied, with a scowl, "The wind is east." At this moment, one of their friends came up, who said with an unmoved countenance: "Molly has cut her throat this morning. Her lover found her dead in her bedroom with a bloody razor

at her side." The company, "who all were Molly's friends," received this horrid intelligence without so much as lifting their eyebrows. One of them merely asked what had become of the lover. "He has bought the razor," quietly remarked one of the company.

The stranger, who seemed to take all this seriously and affects to relate it seriously, could not refrain from inquiring further into such a terrible tragedy. Appalled at once at the event and at the indifference of the company, he asked what could have induced a girl, apparently fortunate, to put an end to her existence in so revolting a manner. They only replied, that the wind was east. Not being able to perceive anything in common between an east wind and the suicide of a young girl or the melancholy humor of the merchants, he abruptly left the coffee-house, and sought again his fashionable friends at court. There, too, all was sad; and nobody could talk of anything but the east wind. He thought of the Dane whom he had met on the stand at Greenwich Fair, and was inclined to laugh at the false idea he was carrying home with him of the English climate; but to his astonishment, he found that the climate was having its effect upon himself,—he could not laugh! Expressing his surprise to one of the court physicians, the doctor told him not to be astonished so soon, for in the months of November and March he would have cause indeed to wonder. *Then* people hanged themselves by dozens; everybody was sick with low spirits, and a black melancholy overspread the whole nation; for in those months the wind blew most frequently from the east. "This wind," continued the "chaffing" doctor, "is the bane of our island. The very animals suffer from it, and wear a dejected look. Men robust enough to stand this cursed wind lose at least their good-humor. Every one shows a severe countenance and has a mind disposed to desperate resolutions. It was an east wind that cut off the head of Charles I. and dethroned James II." Then, whispering in the ear of the Frenchman, he added, "If you have a favor to ask at court, never ask it unless the wind is west or south."

It was not alone the courtiers and the merchants who were disposed to amuse themselves with this inquisitive foreigner.

He was in a boat one day upon the Thames. One of the oarsmen, seeing that he had a Frenchman for a passenger, began to boast of the superior liberty of his country, and declared, with an oath, that he would rather be a Thames boatman than a French archbishop. The next day, Voltaire relates, he saw this very man at the window of a prison stretching his hand through the bars. "What do you think now of a French archbishop?" cried Voltaire. "Ah, sir," replied the man, "the abominable government we have! They have forced me away from my wife and children to serve in a king's ship, and have put me in prison and chained my feet, for fear I should run away before the ship sails." A Frenchman who was with Voltaire at the time confessed that he felt a malicious pleasure in seeing that the English, who reproached the French with their servitude, were as much slaves as they. "I had a sentiment more humane," remarks Voltaire. "I was grieved that there was no more liberty on earth." He consoled himself, also, with observing, that, if the king impressed sailors, everybody in England could speak and write with sufficient freedom. "I have seen four very learned treatises against the reality of the miracles of Jesus Christ printed here with impunity, at a time when a poor bookseller was put into the pillory for publishing a translation of *La Religieuse en Chemise*." He thought it a strange British inconsistency that the government should permit the printing of heresy and punish the publication of indecency. A few days after, he observed another oddity at Newmarket. He was told that there he would see the true Olympic Games. He saw, indeed, a vast concourse of noblemen, the king and royal family, and a "prodigious number of the swiftest horses in Europe flying around the course, ridden by little postilions in silk jackets"; but he also saw "jockeys of quality betting against one another, who put into this solemnity more of swindling than magnificence." He evidently preferred Greenwich Fair to Newmarket Races.

These novel scenes, which he afterwards described with so much gayety, were not sufficient at the time to divert his mind from the recollection of the outrage which he had suffered in France. After spending a few weeks in England, he returned secretly to Paris, at the imminent risk of a third and more rig-

orous *Bastilling* than he had yet suffered. We know nothing of this perilous adventure, except what he relates of it in a letter to his most intimate friend, dated August 22, 1726. "I confess to you," he wrote, "that I have made a little journey to Paris recently. Since I did not see you, you will easily conclude that I saw no one. I sought but a single man, whom the instinct of his poltroonery concealed from me, as if he divined that I was on his track. At last, the fear of discovery made me leave more precipitately than I came." He added, that he was still uncertain whether he should return to England, although in that country the arts were honored and encouraged, and merit made the man. "It is a country where they think freely and nobly, without servile fear. If I followed my inclination, it would be there that I should settle, in the idea merely of learning to think. But I know not yet if my little fortune, much deranged by so many journeys, my bad health, worse than ever, my taste for the most profound retreat, will permit me to encounter the din of Whitehall and London, where I am well recommended, and where I shall be made sufficiently welcome. Only two things remain for me to do in my life: one is, to risk it with honor as soon as I can; the other, to end it in a solitude which accords with my way of thinking, with my misfortunes, and with the knowledge that I have of men. I give up with all my heart my pensions from the king and queen, regretting only that I could not succeed in making over a part of them to you." To add to his unhappiness, his sister died at this time. "How much better," he writes, "for my family and for myself, if I had been taken away in her stead!" The recent death of his father, too, involved him in a troublesome lawsuit.

He returned to England early in the autumn. Having little expectation of being again permitted to reside in France, he settled himself to work with his usual ardor, as though he intended to attempt a career in England as man of letters. His first object, of course, was to make a complete conquest of the English language. He studied it, as he remarks, "with passion," both in the works of great authors and in society; "conversing freely with *wighs* and *torys*; dining with a bishop, and supping with a Quaker; going on Saturday to the Synagogue, and on Sunday to St. Paul's; hearing a sermon in the morning,

and attending the play after dinner ; passing from the court to the exchange ; and, above all, not taking offence at the coldness, the disdainful and icy aspect, with which English ladies receive a stranger, and which some of them never lay aside." What success attended his efforts to master the language, we shall see in a moment.

The friendship of Bolingbroke brought him at once into friendly relations with the literary circle of which that nobleman was the idol and Pope the ornament. The affection entertained for Bolingbroke by literary men was as remarkable as the detestation in which he was held by some of his political associates. Pope paid him the most stupendous compliment, perhaps, that one mortal ever bestowed upon another. "I really think," said Pope, "that there is something in that great man which looks as if he were placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared to us a month or two ago, I had sometimes an imagination that it might possibly have come to our world to carry him away, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." And when Pope was dying, Bolingbroke hung sobbing over his chair, and said : "I have known him these thirty years, and value myself more upon that man's love than ——" His voice failed him and he could utter no more. Voltaire was exceedingly fond of both these brilliant men. In one of his poetical epistles, published in 1726, he speaks of Bolingbroke as one who possessed the eloquence of Cicero, the intrepidity of Cato, the wit of Mæcenas, and the agreeableness of Petronius. He loved him living and he defended him dead. Those sceptical opinions of which, later in life, he was the most conspicuous champion in Europe, evidently took their tone, and their limits too, from those of this English deist, and the deistical party who frequented his house. He relates, however, but one trifling anecdote of his intercourse with Lord Bolingbroke. The conversation turning one day upon the alleged avarice of the Duke of Marlborough, some one appealed to Bolingbroke to confirm the allegation, and with the more confidence because Bolingbroke had been of the party opposed to Marlborough. His reply was, "He was so great a man that I have forgotten his faults."

We may remind the reader, in passing, that, up to this time,

the English deists had had it all their own way. Shaftesbury, Collins, Toland, Chubb, Mandeville, had as yet found no opponents who could cope with them. Paley and Butler had not entered the lists. Wollaston's puny effort tempted even the young Franklin to try his hand at refuting the work which he was setting in type. Deism was in fashion. Voltaire probably met scarcely a man in England whose intellect he respected, who was not either a deist or a Churchman of the Swift and Young species,—that is, Churchmen to whom the Church was a profession merely,—a source of income and honors.

Of the authors then flourishing in London, the one whom Voltaire rated highest was Pope, who was then thirty-eight years of age. Pope's mere mastery of the art of rhyming would have sufficed to attract the regard of a man who had written only in rhyme, and who thought that there was no true poetry without rhyme. It appears that upon this vexed question of rhyme Pope and Voltaire were of the same opinion. He tells us that he asked Pope one day why Milton had not written *Paradise Lost* in rhyme. "Because he could not," answered Pope. This does not accord with the experience of Pope's successor in Homeric translation. Cowper says, that to rhyme in English demands "no great exercise of ingenuity"; and that he has frequently written more lines in a day "with tags to them" than he ever could without.

Voltaire and Pope were in accord upon subjects of more importance than the construction of poems. The vein of moralizing that runs through many of Pope's productions was peculiarly pleasing to Voltaire, who constantly insists that a poem should do something more than amuse. Pope had not yet written the *Essay on Man*, nor the *Universal Prayer*; but his conversation was much in the spirit of those works, which Voltaire regarded as among the masterpieces of English literature, and which by and by he caused to be translated into French. Goldsmith reports, that "Mr. Voltaire has often told his friends that he never observed in himself such a succession of opposite passions as he experienced upon his first interview with Mr. Pope. When he first entered the room and perceived our poor melancholy English poet, naturally deformed and

wasted as he was with sickness and study, he could not help regarding him with the utmost compassion. But when Pope began to speak and to reason upon moral obligations, and dress the most delicate sentiments in the most charming diction, Voltaire's pity began to be changed into admiration, and at last even into envy. It is not uncommon with him to assert, that no man ever pleased him so much in serious conversation, nor any whose sentiments mended so much upon recollection."

It was in the autumn of 1726 that Pope was overturned, as he was returning to London, in Lord Bolingbroke's coach, from that nobleman's country-house. The poet had a narrow escape from drowning in the stream into which he was thrown, and two of his fingers were cut with the glass of the coach window. The accident elicited from Voltaire the first specimen of his English that has been preserved. He had then resided in England four months, since he had spent two months in his secret visit to France. The following is his letter of condolence to Pope:—

"SIR:—I hear this moment of your sad adventure: the water you fell into was not Hippocrene's water; otherwise it would have supported you: indeed, I am concerned beyond expression for the danger you have been in, and more for your wounds. Is it possible, that those fingers which have written 'The Rape of the Lock,' the 'Criticism,' and which have so becomingly dressed Homer in an English coat, should have been so barbarously treated? Let the hand of Dennis or of your poetasters be cut off,—yours is sacred. I hope, sir, you are now perfectly recovered. Really, your accident concerns me as much as all the disasters of a master ought to affect his scholar. I am sincerely, sir, with the admiration which you deserve,

"Your most humble servant,

"VOLTAIRE.

"In my Lord Bolingbroke's House,
Friday, at noon, Nov. 16, 1726."

Dr. Croly, the editor of Pope's works, thinks this a "stiff and school-boy epistle." It seems to us, however, pretty well done for a man who had lived no longer in England. In this connection, the reader may not be displeased to see another specimen of Voltaire's English, written in March, 1727. He began the letter in French, to one of his friends in Paris, but soon broke into English as follows:—

"It was indeed a very hard task formed to find that damned book which, under the title of 'Improvement of Human Reason' (a translation from the Arabic), "is an example of nonsense from one end to the other, and which besides is a tedious nonsense, and consequently very distasteful to the French nation, that detests madness itself, when madness is languishing and flat. The book is scarce, because it is bad, it being the fate of all wretched books never to be printed again. So I spent almost a fortnight in the search of it, till at last I had the misfortune to find it.

"I hope you will not read it throughout, that spiritless nonsense romance, though indeed you deserve to read it, to do penance for the trouble you gave me to inquire after it, for the tiresome perusal I made of some parts of this whimsical, stupid performance, and for your credulity in believing those who gave you so great an idea of so mean a thing.

"You will find in the same parcel the second volume of M. Gulliver, which (by the by I don't advise you to translate) strikes at the first" (i. e. the first volume); "the other is overstrained. The reader's imagination is pleased and charmingly entertained by the new prospect of the lands which Gulliver discovers to him; but that continued series of new fangles, follies, of fairy tales, of wild inventions, pall at last upon our taste. Nothing unnatural may please long; it is for this reason that commonly the second parts of romances are so insipid.

"Farewell; my services to those who remember me; but I hope I am quite forgot here" [there?]. — *Lettres Inédites*, Vol. I. p. 35.

The errors in this hasty familiar letter cannot conceal from us that Voltaire had caught much of the spirit of the language at this time, and was not far from being able to write in it with correctness.

Dean Swift was then in the highest repute. Voltaire was much in his company in London, and it was he who suggested the translation of Gulliver into French. Swift befriended the stranger in various ways, and corresponded with him from Ireland. When the Dean proposed visiting France in 1727, Voltaire gave him letters to his friends, and advised them of the coming of "the English Rabelais."

There was another member of the Pope circle, then unknown to fame, with whom Voltaire contracted the most valuable and the most lasting of his English friendships. This was Everard Falkener, a Turkey merchant, who lived at Wandsworth, five

miles from London, where, in an elegant home provided with a library, he entertained men of letters with generous hospitality. Falkener in later years, partly through Bolingbroke's influence, became the English Ambassador at Constantinople, where he served many years with such ability as to receive the honor of knighthood. He was afterwards variously employed in public life, — much to Voltaire's delight, who thought it glorious to England that a merchant should be chosen for offices to which in France none but nobles could pretend. At the abode of Falkener at Wandsworth, Voltaire resided for more than a year, laboring assiduously at his vocation, and conversing with his host upon Horace and Virgil. There he wrote his play of "Brutus" in the English language, his "History of Charles XII.," and his Essays upon Epic Poetry and upon the Civil Wars of France; and there, too, were written most of those Letters upon the English which, a few years later, made so much noise in the world, and brought upon the author new persecutions. For thirty-five years he remained the friend and correspondent of Sir Everard Falkener, writing to him always in the English language. Their friendship extended even to the next generation; for two sons of Falkener visited Voltaire at Ferney, long after their father's death, and were royally entertained there. Placing one of them at his right and the other at his left at the table, the aged poet exclaimed: "Mon Dieu! How happy I am to find myself between two Falkeners."

Voltaire relates that he called upon Congreve to pay his homage to the man then esteemed the first of living English dramatists. Congreve affected to disregard his own celebrity as an author, and said that he desired only to be considered in the light of a gentleman. Voltaire, who was always a stickler for the dignity of the profession of a man of letters, was so much offended at this ridiculous vanity, that he almost lost his politeness. "If you had only been a gentleman," said he, "I should never have come to see you."

Voltaire, meanwhile, had a business enterprise on his hands. "He knew by intuition," as Bulwer has recently remarked, "that a man who would raise himself into a Power should begin by securing a pecuniary independence." At every period

of his life he looked well to his moneys and his usances. He probably learned the art of managing money from his crabbed old father, who, it is said, made his fortune as a money-lender, and with that fortune bought the offices which gave him consideration. Deprived of his pensions, and collecting with difficulty the revenue of his property in France, which was already considerable, he was busy in England with preparing to publish, by subscription, an edition of *La Henriade* in French. French was then the language of the English court. A company of French comedians usually played in London during a part of the season. Every man of rank was supposed to speak French, of course, and every one who expected court favor necessarily knew the language in which court favor was solicited.

It has been hitherto regarded as a mystery, how it was that Voltaire succeeded so wonderfully in an enterprise which at first wore so unpromising an appearance that no bookseller would undertake it. The names of the king and queen figured at the head of the list of subscribers, which embraced those of a vast number of the nobility and gentry. The price of subscription was a guinea, and the number of subscribers is reported to have been three thousand, yielding the poet a profit of two thousand pounds! The mystery, however, disappears when we look closely into the facts. The friendship of Bolingbroke procured him a most favorable introduction to two powerful classes, namely, men of letters and the old Tory party; of both of whom Lord Bolingbroke was a champion and a favorite. But this was not all. A letter now lying before us shows that a way of access was opened for him to Whig circles, and even to the chiefs of that party, then all-powerful at court and in Parliament. Sir Robert Walpole was Prime Minister, Horace Walpole (brother of Sir Robert and uncle of the Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill) was the English Minister at the French court. Three weeks after the departure of Voltaire from the Bastille, we find this Horace Walpole writing in his behalf to Bubb Dodington, and writing, too, at the solicitation of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. Thus, a minister of the very government that had banished him was interested in his prosperity, and took measures to pro-

mote it, — a minister, too, that owed his place to his friendship for England, and whom the Walpoles were especially solicitous to gratify. If our readers will turn to the diplomatic memoirs of that time, they will perceive that a recommendation from the Count de Morville was the very last thing in the world, just then, that a Walpole would have disregarded. The following was the letter of the English plenipotentiary to Dodington.

“PARIS, May 29, 1726.

“DEAR SIR:—Mr. Voltaire, a French poet, who has wrote several pieces with great success here, being gone for England in order to print by subscription an excellent poem, called *Henry IV.*, which, on account of some bold strokes in it against persecution and the priests, cannot be printed here; M. de Morville, the *Mæcenas*, or, I may truly say, the Dodington here, for the encouragement of wit and learning, has earnestly recommended it to me to use my credit and interest for promoting this subscription among my friends; on which account, as well as for the sake of merit, I thought I could apply myself nowhere more properly than to you; and I hope this will answer the particular view and interest which I have in it myself, which is to renew a correspondence so agreeable to me; who am, with the greatest truth and affection, sir,

“Your most obedient and most humble servant,

“H. WALPOLE.”

This letter had the effect intended. It was at Mr. Dodington's seat in Dorsetshire that Voltaire became intimate with Young, afterwards the author of the “*Night Thoughts*,” and already a poet of considerable celebrity. The anecdote which connects the names of Young and Voltaire is familiar to many of our readers. The French poet, it is said, objected to Milton's personification of Sin and Death, when Dr. Young is reported to have addressed him thus:—

“Thou art so witty, profligate, and thin,

At once we think thee Milton, Death, and Sin.”

Or, as others have it,

“That thou thyself art Milton's Death and Sin.”

If Dr. Young was guilty of such a couplet upon a stranger, it must have been in jest, over Dodington's “*flowing Burgundy*”; for a few years later we find him dedicating a poem to Vol-

taire, in complimentary verse, styling him his "patron," and alluding to his many triumphs in prose and verse. He speaks of having soothed him with "*gentle rhymes*" on Dorset Downs, when Milton's Death and Sin provoked his rage, and recalls himself to Voltaire as one

"Who half inclined thee to confess,
Nor could thy modesty do less,
That Milton's blindness lay not in his song."

Having access to the most influential circles in England, both literary and political, Voltaire was not the man to abstain from making the most of his opportunities. He appears to have conducted his publishing enterprise himself. Certain it is that he personally solicited his friends to use their influence in procuring subscriptions. "May I beg you," he writes to Dean Swift, enclosing the advertisement, "to use your influence in Ireland to procure some subscribers for *La Henriade*, which is finished, and which, for want of a little aid, has not yet appeared. The subscription is only one guinea, payable in advance." Swift did procure subscribers in Ireland.

Besides Voltaire's "pushing," the poem had the advantage of containing much that was calculated to please the English taste of that day. Copies of the Dutch edition were in circulation in England. Queen Elizabeth figures in it. England is always alluded to, as in all the works of Voltaire, with respect. And there were very many passages that appealed to the Protestant feeling of a country that had only twenty-eight years before dethroned a king because he was a Catholic.

Now, in two senses of the word, *La Henriade* may be called an orthodox production. The poet employs the machinery, the supernatural effects and persons, the episodes and illustrations, as by Homer and Virgil established. Superstition, Fanaticism, Discord, Love, appear as persons, retarding, accelerating, guiding the action of the poem. St. Louis, also, father of the Bourbons, plays a decisive part. The reader is conducted to heaven and to hell, and is permitted even to look upon the eternal throne of God. Similes in the style of Homer, imitated by all epic poets, continually occur; and prophetic views of the future, in the manner of Virgil and Dante, give Voltaire an opportunity of introducing characters

living in his own time. Besides this poetic orthodoxy, there is an evident attempt throughout to propitiate the masters of France by an orthodoxy of opinion. The poet speaks of his Protestant hero as "a supporter of the party of *error*"; and concludes his poem by converting him to the Catholic faith, causing him even to discern a God under the guise of bread,— "the living sustenance of his elect." The descriptions of God, and of his dwelling-place, are not such as a Catholic would disapprove. At the same time, Voltaire does not forget that he lives under an absolute king, and that Paris has a Bastille. "He who dies for his king, dies always with glory," is one of his lines; and in another he tells his countrymen that the crimes committed by their ancestors will not involve *them*, "for your love for your kings has made reparation for them all."

Yet, notwithstanding this framework and veil of orthodoxy, the essential spirit of the poem is modern and Protestant. It is no "Heavenly Muse" whom its opening lines invoke, but "August Truth." While denouncing persecution for opinion's sake, the poet declares that Catholics and Protestants, as parties, are equally cruel and false. The massacre of St. Bartholomew is related with eloquence and pathos, as an English Protestant of that day would have had it related. As a climax of horror, the poet says that the murderers were urged on by the voice of "sanguinary priests, who invoked the Lord while slaughtering their brethren, and dared, with arms wet with the blood of innocence, to offer to God that execrable incense." Papal Rome is represented as "inflexible to the vanquished, complaisant to the conqueror." The hero of the poem observes, that "a great man ought not to dread the thunders of Rome, and that Rome and Geneva are equally indifferent to him." The decline of the Church from its original purity, the pride, the arrogance, the vices of the Papal hierarchy, are treated in a manner which would not have displeased Luther; while true Religion is described in language that Wesley and Watts would have enjoyed. "Far from the pagantry of Rome, from worldly pomp, from temples consecrated to human vanity, whose splendid decorations impose upon the universe, humble Religion hides herself in deserts. There lives she with God in peace profound, while her name, profaned in the world, is the holy pretext of the fury

of tyrants, a blind for the people, the contempt of the great. To suffer is her destiny ; to bless, her portion. She prays in secret for the ingrate who outrages her. Without ornament, without art, beautiful in her own charms, her modest loveliness remains forever hidden from the false, importunate crowd who run to her altars to worship Fortune." In hell, too, the reader finds many kings undergoing punishment for the wrongs which they committed and the wrongs which they did not avenge. There also are ministers who sold to the highest bidder the honors due to virtue, and the justice due to all men. The Inquisition is heartily denounced, and the Bastille is spoken of as " that frightful castle, palace of vengeance, which often confines crime and innocence."

The most careless reader of *La Henriade* perceives or suspects that the passages which conform to the orthodoxy of France were dictated by policy ; while the heart of the poet is in those which denounce tyranny, fanaticism, superstition, intolerance, and cruelty. Compared with the great epics of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso, and Milton, *La Henriade* is a slight work indeed. Its departures from historic truth are of themselves fatal to its effect upon a modern reader ; who, at the same time, finds something almost ludicrous in the hero relating the civil wars of France to Queen Elizabeth precisely in the tone of Æneas recounting to Dido the fall of Troy. It is like clothing the statue of a member of Congress in the costume of a Roman Senator. Nevertheless, *La Henriade* is a brilliant, flashing, stirring production. It contains several passages that approach the highest excellence, and several lines that reach it. If Voltaire could only have forgotten his Virgil, discarded the supernatural, and relied only on rational means of exciting interest, he might have produced a work which other nations beside the French would still read with satisfaction as well as pleasure. As it is, we can only regard it as the supreme effort of that stage of mental culture which we call the Sophomoric ; though for ten years longer Voltaire continued to call it " the least bad of his works."

Voltaire dedicated the English edition of his poem to Queen Caroline, consort of George II., a princess who paid some honor to literature. His dedicatory epistle was written in the

English language. We believe it has never been printed in America.

“TO THE QUEEN.

“MADAM:—It was the fate of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by the great Elizabeth, who was in her age the glory of her sex. By whom can his memory be so well protected as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal virtues?

“Your Majesty will find in this book bold, impartial truths; morality unstained with superstition; a spirit of liberty, equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny; the rights of kings always asserted, and those of mankind never laid aside.

“The same spirit in which it is written gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who, among so many crowned heads, enjoys almost the inestimable honor of ruling a free nation; a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his glory in being just.

“Our Descartes, who was the greatest philosopher in Europe before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his *Principles* to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth; not, said he, because she was a princess (for true philosophers respect princes and never flatter them); but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved truth the most.

“I beg leave, Madam, (without comparing myself to Descartes,) to dedicate The *Henriade* to your Majesty upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

“I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue as well as the highest rank, may it please your Majesty, your Majesty's most humble, most dutiful, and most obliged servant,

“VOLTAIRE.”

Readers familiar with the dedicatory epistles of that time will admit that this one is less extravagantly fulsome than was then usual. It has also the advantage of containing an idea or two. Goldsmith informs us that the queen acknowledged the homage of the poet by sending him her miniature “worth two hundred guineas.” But as Voltaire does not mention the circumstance in any of his existing letters, and as he was not the man to omit mentioning it if it had occurred, we must regard it as more than doubtful. Of the reception of *La Henriade* by the English public, we only know one fact: within four

years of the appearance of Voltaire's edition, the poem was translated into English verse and published in London. It had already appeared in German, and ere long found an Italian and a Spanish translator.

Voltaire presented himself as an English author during his residence in England. He published a volume in the English language in December, 1727, of which the following was the title, as given in a London monthly magazine:—

“An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, extracted from curious Manuscripts. And, also, upon the Epic Poems of the European Nations, from Homer down to Milton. By Mr. de Voltaire. London. Printed by Samuel Fallasson, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. 1727. In 8vo. pagg. 130.”

We know of no copy of this work in America; and in the works of Voltaire the Essays appear in French. The editor of the magazine, unfortunately, did not think it necessary to criticise the volume. He merely remarks, “These two Essays deserve to be read by all the curious.” Spence informs us that Dr. Young corrected one of them. The Doctor, he observes, set honestly to work and marked the passages that were most faulty; “and when he went to explain himself about them, Voltaire could not avoid bursting out laughing in his face.” In sending a copy of his work to Dean Swift, Voltaire indulges in the strain of extravagant compliment which disfigures so many of his letters: “Have some indulgence for one of your admirers, who owes it to your writings to have carried his fondness for your language to the point of having the rashness to write in English.”

It is in his character of observer, however, that Voltaire chiefly interests us during his stay in England. We have said enough to show that he knew the language sufficiently well to appreciate English authors, and that he had access to circles which enabled him to study the national character. Let us see what it was that he observed in England, what he studied, what impressions were made upon him. With regard to the objects of his inquiry we can justly give him the praise of being one of the most intelligent of travellers; for, besides the language of the country, it was its religion, its institutions, its learning, its poetry, its drama, that he studied.

In all these, and above them all, he loved the freedom that the people enjoyed, — “the noble liberty of thinking,” which he deemed the cause of whatever he found in any of them that was excellent. This freedom, too, he regarded as the reason why the different religious sects lived together in harmony. “Enter the London Exchange,” he remarks in one of his Letters upon the English, “a place more respectable than many courts. There you see the representatives of all nations assembled for a useful purpose. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian treat one another as if they were of the same religion, and give the name of infidel only to bankrupts. There the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist, and the Church-of-England man takes the word of a Quaker. On leaving this peaceful and free assembly, some go to the Synagogue, others go to drink; this man proceeds to be baptized in a great tub in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that man circumcises his son, and causes to be muttered over the child Hebrew words which are quite unintelligible to him; others go to their churches to await the inspiration of God with their hats on: all are content. If there was in England but one religion, its despotic sway were to be feared; if there were but two, they would cut one another’s throats; but as there are thirty, they live in peace and are happy.”

The Quakers, who were still a novelty in England to foreigners, attracted the particular attention of this most unquaker-like of men. Believing, as he says, that the doctrines and history of so extraordinary a people merited the study of an intelligent man, he sought the society of one of the most famous Quakers in England, a retired merchant, who lived in a cottage near London, “well built and adorned only with its own neatness.” The curious stranger visited him in his retreat.

“The Quaker was an old man of fresh complexion, who had never been sick, because he always had been continent and temperate. In my life I have never seen a presence more noble nor more engaging than his. He was dressed, like all those of his persuasion, in a coat without plaits at the sides, or buttons on the pockets and sleeves, and wore a broad-brimmed hat like those of our ecclesiastics. He received me with his hat on, and advanced towards me without making the least inclination of his body; but there was more politeness

in the open and humane expression of his countenance than there is in the custom of drawing one leg behind the other, and in that of carrying in the hand what was made to cover the head. 'Friend,' said he to me, 'I see that thou art a stranger; if I can be of any use to thee, thou hast only to speak.' 'Sir,' said I to him, with a bow and a step forward, according to our custom, 'I flatter myself that my reasonable curiosity will not displease you, and that you will be willing to do me the honor to instruct me in your religion.' 'The people of thy country,' he replied, 'make too many compliments and bows; but I have never before seen one of them who had the same curiosity as thou. Come in and take dinner with me.' I still kept paying him bad compliments, because a man cannot all at once lay aside his habits; and, after a wholesome and frugal repast, which began and ended with a prayer to God, I began to question my host. I began with the question which good Catholics have put more than once to the Huguenots: 'My dear sir,' said I, 'have you been baptized?' 'No,' replied the Quaker, 'nor my brethren either.' 'How! *Morbleu!* You are not Christians, then?' 'My friend,' he mildly rejoined, 'swear not; we do not think that Christianity consists in sprinkling water upon the head with a little salt.' 'Heh, *bon Dieu!*' said I, shocked at this impiety; 'have you forgotten, then, that Jesus Christ was baptized by John?' 'Friend, once more, no oaths,' replied the benign Quaker: 'Christ received baptism from John; but he baptized no one; we are not John's disciples, but Christ's.' 'Ah,' cried I, 'how you would be burned by the Holy Inquisition. In the name of God, my dear man, let me have you baptized!' . . . 'Art thou circumcised?' he asked. I replied that I had not that honor. 'Very well, friend,' said he, 'thou art a Christian without being circumcised, and I without being baptized.'"

The conversation was continued to great length. In his report of it, Voltaire affects throughout the tone of the good Catholic, — Louis XV. being then king of France, and Cardinal de Fleuri his prime minister. He adds, that the benign Quaker conducted him, on the following Sunday, to a Quaker meeting, where he heard one of the brethren utter a long, nonsensical harangue, "half with his mouth, half with his nose," of which no one understood anything. He asked his friend why they permitted such silliness (*sottises*). The Quaker answered that they were obliged to endure it, because they could not know, when a man got up to speak, whether he was moved by the Spirit or by folly. The Quaker meeting appears to have

effaced the good impressions of the sect which he had derived from his conversations with the retired merchant. Nevertheless, he proceeds to relate the history of the Quakers and of William Penn. He concludes by remarking that the denomination, though flourishing in Pennsylvania, was on the decline in England, because the young Quakers, enriched by their fathers' industry, desired to enjoy the honors of public office, and to wear fashionable clothes, and to escape the reproach of belonging to a sect ridiculed by the world.

In his remarks upon the Church of England, Voltaire gives us a taste of his veritable self: "One can have no public employment in England, or Ireland, without being of the number of the faithful Anglicans; this reason, which is an excellent proof, has converted so many dissenters that to-day not a twentieth part of the nation is out of the pale of the Established Church." "The lower house of convocation formerly enjoyed some credit; at least, it had the privilege of meeting, of debating controverted points of doctrine, and of burning, now and then, some impious books, i. e. books against themselves. The Whig ministry, however, does not even permit those gentlemen to assemble, and they are reduced, in the obscurity of their parishes, to the mournful business of praying to God for a government which they would not be sorry to disturb." "The priests are almost all married. The awkwardness which they acquire at the Universities, and the little acquaintance they have here with women, usually has the effect of obliging a bishop to be contented with his own wife. The priests go to the taverns sometimes, because custom permits it; and if they get drunk, it is in a serious way, and without scandal. . . . When they are told that in France young men, known by their debaucheries and raised to the rank of bishop by female intrigues, openly make love, amuse themselves by composing love songs, give every day costly and elaborate suppers, and go from those suppers to implore the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and boldly call themselves the successors of the Apostles, then they thank God that they are Protestants. Nevertheless, they are abominable heretics, fit to be burned by all the devils, as Rabelais says; and that is the reason why I do not meddle with their affairs."

Upon the government of England Voltaire descants in a graver strain. He failed not to inform his countrymen that in England no tax could be laid, except with the consent of the King, Lords, and Commons, and that every man was assessed, not as in France according to his rank, or rather according to his want of rank, but according to his income. Nor did he omit to remark that in England the peasant's feet were not blistered by wooden shoes. "He eats white bread ; he is well clad ; he fears not to increase the number of his beasts, nor to cover his roof with tiles, for fear of having to pay a higher tax the next year. You see many peasants who have five or six hundred pounds sterling a year, and yet do not disdain to continue to cultivate the lands that have enriched them, and upon which they live as freemen." He observed with pleasure that the younger sons of noble families frequently entered into commerce,—a thing unheard of then in France. "I know not, however," he slyly remarks, "which is the more useful to a state, a well-powdered lord, who knows precisely at what hour the king gets up and goes to bed, and who gives himself airs upon playing the part of slave in a minister's antechamber, or a merchant who enriches his country, who from his counting-room sends orders to Surat and Cairo, and contributes to the happiness of mankind."

Of the philosophers of England, Locke and Newton were those whom he studied longest and admired most. He was one of the first of his countrymen who understood the discoveries of Newton, and it was he who made them popularly known to France. Locke he frequently styles the wisest of human beings, and the only man who had ever written worthily upon metaphysics. Lord Bacon, he thought, "knew not Nature, but he knew and pointed out all the paths that lead to a knowledge of her." "He despised, early in his career, that which fools in square caps taught under the name of philosophy, in those mad-houses called *colleges* ; and he did all that he could to keep them from continuing to confuse the mind by their *nature abhorring a vacuum*, their *substantial forms*, and all those words which not only ignorance rendered respectable, but which a ridiculous blending with religion rendered sacred. He is the father of experimental philosophy." All of Vol-

taire's remarks upon Bacon, Newton, and Locke show that he was at home in their works, and that he comprehended the peculiar importance of each of those great men.

The same praise cannot be bestowed upon his remarks on the drama of England. Shakespeare was above the reach of his genius. The fact alone that Voltaire, reading Shakespeare in Shakespeare's own tongue, failed to perceive his superiority to all other poets and dramatists, suffices to prove to us that, great Frenchman as he was, he was not a great man. "Shakespeare," he says, "created the English theatre. He had a genius full of force and fecundity, of nature and sublimity; but without the least spark of good taste, and without the slightest knowledge of the rules. I am going to say something bold, but true: it is, that the merit of this author has ruined the English drama. There are such beautiful scenes, there are passages so grand and so terrible in those monstrous farces which they call tragedies, that his pieces have always been played with great success. Time, which alone gives reputation to men, renders at length their faults respectable. Most of the odd and gigantesque notions of this author have acquired at the end of two hundred years the right to pass for sublime. Modern authors have almost all copied them; but that which succeeded in Shakespeare is hissed in them." He proceeds to remark, that England has produced but one tragedy worthy to be ranked with the master-pieces of the French stage, and that was Addison's *Cato*. The writings of Voltaire contain, perhaps, a hundred allusions to Shakespeare, but most of them in this tone; and in the last piece of prose he ever wrote, he still speaks of him as an inspired barbarian. In one of his essays, in 1761, after giving a ludicrous outline of *Hamlet*, he enters into an inquiry how it could be that a nation which had produced the *Cato* of Addison could endure such crudities. This is his reason: "The chairmen, the sailors, the hackney-coachmen, the shopmen, the butchers, and even the clergy, in England, are passionately fond of shows. Give them cock-fights, bull-fights, gladiatorial combats, funerals, witchcraft, duels, hangings, ghosts, and they run in throngs to see them; and there is more than one lord as curious in these things as the populace. The people of London find in the tragedies of Shakespeare all that can please

such a taste as this. The courtiers were obliged to follow the torrent."

Two or three considerations may lessen our astonishment at Voltaire's inveterate blindness to the transcendent merits of Shakespeare. One is, that he spoke of Shakespeare precisely as the great lights of English literature, from Dryden to Goldsmith, were accustomed to speak of him. Dryden styled *Troilus and Cressida* "a heap of rubbish." Dryden thought he had converted the *Tempest* into a tolerable play when he had spoiled it. Pope spoke of a forgotten play of the Earl of Dorset's as "written in a much purer style than Shakespeare's in his first plays." Bolingbroke, as Voltaire mentions, agreed with him upon the irregularities of Shakespeare. Goldsmith speaks of the "amazing, irregular beauties of Shakespeare." When George III. said to Miss Burney, that most of Shakespeare was "sad stuff," he probably expressed an opinion that prevailed in the higher circles of his time. There is reason to conclude that, when Voltaire's *Letters upon the English* appeared in London, his remarks upon Shakespeare were approved by the frequenters of such houses as those of Bolingbroke, Dodington, and Pope.

The customs of the French stage, in Voltaire's day, furnish some further explanation of his insensibility to Shakespeare. The tragic drama in France was a kind of drawing-room pastime,—decorous, artificial, high-flown, and dull. The common people attended the theatre only on festive days, when free admissions were given. This Voltaire himself records in one of his letters. To have introduced into a play the name of a prince of the reigning family, would have been deemed a very great audacity. No author presumed to do it till Voltaire, emboldened, as he says, by Shakespeare's example, brought upon the scene characters famous in the history of France. At the same time, it was against the "rules" to present to the courtly audiences of that day peasants, mechanics, or any plebeian except a soldier, a *valet de chambre*, or a waiting-maid. No one could kill another on the stage. The only killing permitted was decorous and classical suicide. The entire action of the play was required to be exhibited in the same apartment, and in the space of time occupied in its rep-

resentation. Subject to such rules,—subject, also, to the restraints of rhyme,—what could a French tragedy be but a series of stately dialogues? The events were not exhibited, but related. There was no coloring or naturalness, no comic interludes, no relief, no forms of salutation even; and scarcely any of those passages like Shakespeare's "Mercy is twice blessed," or "All the world's a stage," which lift the auditor out of the scene before him into the realm of abstract truth. The villains are conscious villains; they confess themselves villains to themselves and to their comrades; unlike the Iagos and the Richards of Shakespeare, unlike the villains of real life, who invariably use the little intellect they have in forming a theory of their situation which justifies or palliates their guilt.

Accustomed to such a drama as this, Voltaire was shocked beyond measure at such scenes as those of the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, the fool in *Lear*, the cobblers in *Julius Cæsar*. When his *Tancrède* was performed, in 1760, the leading actress implored his consent to the erection of a scaffold upon the stage, draped in black. "My friend," he replied, "we must fight the English, not imitate their barbarous theatre. Let us study their philosophy; let us trample under our feet, as they do, infamous prejudices; let us drive out the Jesuits and wolves; let us no longer stupidly oppose inoculation and the attraction of gravitation; let us learn from them how to cultivate land; but let us beware of copying their savage drama."

Moreover, his self-love was interested. If Shakespeare was right, Voltaire was wrong. If *Hamlet* was a good tragedy, what was *L'Œdipe*? We must nevertheless repeat, that, if Voltaire had been as great a man as he was a Frenchman, he would have recovered from the wound to his self-love, and hailed the Shakespearian method as the true one. His inability to do this limits his claim to our regard, both as a human being and as an artist. It serves to explain, also, in some degree, his failure to comprehend things of higher importance than the drama.

He succeeded little better with Milton. In many passages of his works, he ridicules the "odd and extravagant concep-

tions" of that poet, to whose merit, however, he was not wholly insensible. *Paradise Lost*, he concludes, "is a work more peculiar than natural, fuller of imagination than of grace, and of boldness than judgment; of which the subject is wholly ideal, and which seems not made for man." He admired the "majestic strokes with which Milton dared to depict God, and the character, still more brilliant, which he gives the Devil." The description of the Garden of Eden pleased him, as well as the "innocent loves of Adam and Eve." But when he comes to speak of the combats between the angels and the fallen spirits, of the mountains hurled upon each other, and of the great gathering of the devils in a hall, he can see in those passages only something barbaric and ludicrous. Milton, he remarks, was a bad prose-writer, and combated the apologists of King Charles as a ferocious beast fights a savage. In all that he says of Milton, we perceive the influence of the English circle which he frequented. So Bolingbroke spoke of the author of *Paradise Lost*.

It was during Voltaire's stay in England that news was brought to the literary circle which he frequented that a daughter of Milton was living in London, old, infirm, and very poor. "In a quarter of an hour," he tells us, "she was rich." He thought of this incident, thirty-five years later, when he was soliciting subscriptions for the edition of *Corneille* which he published for the benefit of the granddaughter of that poet, whom he had adopted and was educating. He used it as a spur to the zeal of those who were aiding him. Milton's daughter died soon after, but not before she had related many particulars of her father's life and habits, which Voltaire eagerly gathered and afterwards recorded.

The English comedy of that time appears to have afforded the stranger much enjoyment. He complains, however, of the indecency of the popular comedies. But he appears to have been shocked only at the indecency of the *words* employed, not at all at the enormous and hideous indecency of the events exhibited. "We are bound to consider," he remarks, "that, if the Romans permitted gross expressions in the satires which only a few people read, they allowed no improper words upon the stage. For, as La Fontaine says, 'Chaste are the ears,

though the eyes be loose.' In a word, no one should pronounce in public a word which a modest woman may not repeat." Here we have the explanation of the fact that an Englishman in Paris and a Frenchman in London are equally astounded at the indecency of the plays which they attend. The Frenchman brings to the theatre fastidious ears, and the Englishman chaste eyes. The third and fourth acts of *Tartuffe* contain nothing offensive to a French audience, though it would be shocked at some of the words in the first act of *Othello*. An Englishwoman can endure a gross word or two in the midst of a scene otherwise proper, but would be inclined to run out of the theatre upon the performance of a whole act of decorous seduction which threatens at every moment to be successful; the husband of the lady being hidden under the table, and appearing only when the author has exhausted every other resource.

Propos of *Tartuffe*, Voltaire gives an unexpected reason for the failure in England of a comedy which has given to the English stage so many of its religious hypocrites, and to Dickens perhaps his Uriah Heep. He says, that before there can be false devotees there must be true ones; and one of the great advantages of the English nation is, that it has no *Tartuffes*. "The English scarcely know the name of devotee; but they know well that of honest man. You do not see there any imbeciles who put their souls into the keeping of others, nor any of those petty ambitious men who establish in a neighborhood a despotic sway over silly women formerly wanton and always weak, and over men weaker and more contemptible than they." Would he have said as much in 1865?

Voltaire concludes his reviews of English literature by remarking, that, as the English had profited much from works in the French language, so the French, in their turn, ought to borrow from them. "We have both," he adds, "we and the English, followed the Italians, who are in everything our masters, and whom we have surpassed in some things. I know not to which of the three nations we ought to give the preference; but happy he who knows how to enjoy their different merits." In one particular, however, he awards the palm to England:

England honored literature and learning most. In France, he says, Addison might have been member of the Academy, and might have obtained a pension by the influence of a woman ; or he might have been brought to trouble under the pretext that there might be found in his Cato some reflections upon the porter of a man in power. In England, he was Secretary of State ; Newton was Master of the Mint ; Congreve held an important office ; Prior was plenipotentiary ; Swift was dean in Ireland, and much more considered there than the primate ; and if Pope's religion kept him out of office, it did not prevent his gaining two hundred thousand francs by his translation of Homer. "What encourages most the men of letters in England is the consideration in which they are held. The portrait of the prime minister is to be found hanging above the mantel-piece of his own study ; but I have seen that of Mr. Pope in twenty houses."

Voltaire lived two years in England. In 1728, before the copies of *La Henriade* had been all delivered to the subscribers, the capricious tyranny which had banished him permitted his return to France. He had abandoned himself so entirely to the study of English, that when he resumed the habit of writing in French it was some time before he could use it with his former freedom.

It is scarcely possible to overstate the influence upon his mind and writings of his residence in England. The index to his works contains more than a thousand references to English authors, English learning, English customs, English laws, and especially English freedom. His letters are full of England and the English. "The French," he says in one of them, "are not *public-spirited* ; hard and trifling nation, they have not even the word." In another he observes : "The love of law has become a passion with the English people, because every one is interested in the keeping of the law." In another : "In England a man must be all Whig or all Tory." In another : "We have been obliged to adopt their natural philosophy, to imitate their system of finance, to build ships after their plans ; when shall we imitate them in their noble liberty of giving the mind all the play (*essor*) of which it is capable ? When shall fools cease to hunt down the wise ?" In

another: "Last year (1752) the Bishop of Worcester preached in London, before Parliament, in favor of inoculation. Such sermons are of more value than the twaddle of our preachers." In another: "In truth, we are the whipped cream of Europe; there are not twenty Frenchmen who understand Newton." We could fill many pages with such passages as these, all tending to show that it was this residence in England which completed Voltaire's education as a thinking man, and gave tone to all his subsequent labors. Goldsmith relates that, thirty years after his return to France, he was in his company one evening when the conversation turned upon England, and one of the company "undertook to revile" both the language and the authors of that country. Diderot defended them, but not with much success. Voltaire listened in silence to the dispute till midnight; which was the more surprising, because, as Goldsmith remarks, this was one of his favorite topics. But, at last, "Voltaire appeared roused from his reverie. His whole frame seemed animated. He began his defence with the utmost elegance mixed with spirit, and now and then he let fall his finest strokes of raillery upon his antagonist; and his harangue lasted until three in the morning. I must confess that, whether from national partiality, or from the elegant sensibility of his manner, I never was more charmed, nor did I ever remember so absolute a victory as he gained in this dispute."

We observe in the volumes of his letters that he continued to correspond with his English friends to the latest period of his life. Among his English correspondents were Bolingbroke, Lady Bolingbroke, Swift, Falkener, Hume, Robertson, Lord Lyttelton, Horace Walpole, Lord Chatham, and Colman. To his friend Falkener he dedicated his tragedy of *Zaïre*, and to him he wrote the long series of letters in the English language which appear in the volumes of *Lettres Inédites*. In 1748, he had the pleasure of congratulating him upon his marriage to a connection of the Duke of Marlborough, and upon his appointment to be secretary to the Duke of Cumberland, commanding the English army in Flanders. This letter shows that twenty years' absence from England had not made him forget his English.

"À M. LE CHEVALIER FALKENER.

"LUNÉVILLE, à la Cour de Lorraine,
le 5 Novembre, 1748.

"DEAR SIR, — Your letter has afforded me the most sensible satisfaction; for when my friendship for you began, it was a bargain for life. Time, that alters all things, and chiefly my poor tattered body, has not altered my sentiments.

"You acquaint me you are a husband and a father, and I hope you are an happy one. It behooves a secretary to a great general to marry a great officer's daughter; and really, I am transported with joy to see the blood of Marlborough mixed with that of my dearest Falkener. I do present your lady with my most humble respects, and I kiss your child.

"You are a lusty husband, and I a weak bachelor, as much unhealthy as when you saw me, but some twenty years older. Yet I have a kind of conformity with you; for if you are attached to a hero, so I am in the retinue of another, though not so intimately as you are. My king has appointed me one of the ordinary gentlemen of his chamber, — *Gentilhomme ordinaire de sa chambre*. Your post is more honorable and profitable; yet I am satisfied with mine, because, if it gives not a great income, it leaves me at my full liberty, which I prefer to kings.

"The king of Prussia would once have given me one thousand pounds sterling *per annum* to live at his court; and I did not accept of the bargain, because the court of a king is not comparable to the house of a friend. I have lived these twenty years since with the same friend; and you know what power friendship gets over a tender soul and over a philosophical one. I find a great delight in opening my heart to you, and in giving you thus an account of my conduct. I will tell you that, being appointed also historiographer of France, I write the history of the late fatal war, which did much harm to all the parties; and did good only to the king of Prussia. I wish I could show you what I have wrote upon that subject. I hope I have done justice to the great Duke of Cumberland. My history shall not be the work of a courtier, nor that of a partial man, but that of a lover of mankind.

"As to the tragedy of *Sémiramis*, I'll send it to you within a month or two. I always remember with great pleasure, that I dedicated to you the tender tragedy of *Zaïre*. This *Sémiramis* is quite of another kind. I have tried, though it was a hard task, to change our French *petits-mâîtres* into Athenian hearers. The transformation is not quite performed; but the piece has met with great applause. It has the fate of moral books that please many, without mending anybody. I am now,

my dear friend, at the court of King Stanislas, where I have passed some months with all the easiness and cheerfulness that I enjoyed once at Wandsworth; for you must know that King Stanislas is a kind of Falkener. . . . He is indeed the best man alive. But, for fear you should take me for a wanderer of courts and a vagabond courtier, I will tell you that I am here with the very same friend whom I never parted from these twenty years past, the Lady du Chatelet, who comments Newton, and is now about printing a French translation of it; she is the friend I mean.

"I have at Paris some enemies, such as Pope had at London; and I despise them as he did. In short, I live as happy as my condition can permit.

"'Excepto quod non simul esses, cetera lætus!' I return you a thousand thanks, my dearest and worthy friend. I wish you all the happiness you deserve; and I'll be yours for ever.

"VOLTAIRE."

Voltaire was the last man in the world to hide any light that he possessed under a bushel. He was nothing, if not communicative. There never was a person so little reticent. The whole of his long life was a ceaseless acquiring and imparting. *La Henriade* was the result of his conversations with a man familiar with the times of Henry IV. His History of Charles XII. came of his chance acquaintance with a person who had been part of that history. His Elements of Newton grew out of his sympathy with the favorite studies of Madame du Chatelet. He no sooner knew a thing than he was on fire to communicate it. He says truly of himself, that he had a "passion" to make known to France the masterpieces of other nations, — their science, their wisdom, their history. He labored for thirty years to overcome the scruples of the French against inoculation. This instinct of communication being so powerful in him, we cannot wonder that his English experience, so novel, so interesting, so triumphant, should have strongly influenced all his subsequent writings.

To state the effect upon France of his English knowledge, would be to state the causes of the French Revolution. The most remarkable pages in Mr. Buckle's History of Civilization are two in his first volume which contain a catalogue of names of French authors who, during the reign of Louis XV., studied the language and the authors of England. Those two pages

prove that every person who influenced France at that period drew inspiration from English sources. And this was chiefly Voltaire's work. The publication of his *Letters upon England*, in 1730,—letters written with all his vivacity and wit,—disclosed to the intelligence of France glimpses of an unknown and enchanting world; for at that day France was as far from England as Australia now is from the United States. Not twenty Frenchmen, probably, could then read English. The philosophy of Bacon, Newton, and Locke had scarcely been heard of, save by a few men of learning. The poetry and literature, the Church, the institutions, the customs of England, were all unknown. Voltaire partly lifted the veil, and revealed enough to excite a desire to see more. The French government, too, by placing its ineffectual ban upon the work, added to it the charm of forbidden fruit. It drove Voltaire from Paris; but finding a retreat in the chateau of Madame du Chatelet, he endured seventeen years of solitude, during which he had no resource against ennui but in literary labors of the same tendency.

Nothing would have been easier than for the government to have made Voltaire an ally. He was not at all inclined to be a martyr. No man in France was more disposed to make himself comfortable in the world. A smile now and then from the king, a place, and a pension, would have kept his restive pen under curb. The government chose to make an enemy of him. It had reached that point of blindness and folly which never yet ended except in destruction. Within fifteen years after Voltaire had published his English letters, it was truly said by a French writer that in France English held the rank of a learned language. "Our women study it, and have abandoned Italian in order to study the language of this philosophic people. There is not any of us who does not desire to learn English." The prevalence of this taste can be directly traced to Voltaire. The very fashions of England were adopted in Paris to an extent that was ridiculous. Many of our readers remember, perhaps, the letter of the eccentric Count Lauraguais, in which he speaks of this: "We are all metamorphosed into English; a strange and sudden revolution has happened in our dress, equipages, furniture, kitchens, and diversions. Our dan-

dies, who formerly were dressed, painted, and perfumed like dolls at ten in the morning, now ride in the environs of Paris in a plain shirt and frock, like English jockeys. Our delicate ladies, who never ventured to stir out in the morning, run all over Paris and frequent the public walks, in the genteel and loose dress of milkmaids. Our carriages are neat, plain, and convenient. Horse-races are frequent; our stables are full of English hunters and grooms; and our whips, saddles, and boots are manufactured by your countrymen, who have reduced ours to beggary. We have introduced roast beef and puddings in lieu of our soups, ragouts, and fricasee. We hunt, swear, drink toasts, and determine all disputes by bets, like your nobility and gentry," etc., etc.

Seven years later, Voltaire published his "Elements of the Philosophy of Newton,"—a popular, entertaining statement of the contents of the *Principia*. This work had a twofold effect. Besides overturning and finally abolishing the old philosophy, it excited that universal taste for science which prevailed in Europe during the thirty years preceding the Revolution, and which was a potent cause of that Revolution. This work, too, was forbidden; which greatly assisted to give it currency, and to make the intellect of France a solid phalanx against the old *régime*. That was the secret of the French Revolution. When the established order of things in Church or State is such that every man of sense and feeling is necessarily its foe, one of two things must speedily come to pass,—reform or revolution. Little, indeed, could such a man as Voltaire have affected the march of events, if he had not had the constant and mighty co-operation of an absolute king. Voltaire wrote, and the king served him as advertising agent.

The correspondence of Voltaire must have been an important element of his power. A large number of his letters, it is true, were written under restraint, or for a purpose which compelled him to take the tone of the great world. The great mass of them, however, written to old friends and schoolfellows, breathe the spirit of liberty. Opening a volume at random, we are likely enough to fall upon such a letter as the following, which may serve to show his habit of mind. It was written to the Marquis d'Argenson, from Holland, in 1743.

"Be Chancellor of France, Monsieur, if you wish me to return ; restore to us the glory of literature, since we are losing that of arms. Men were made originally, it seems to me, to think, to instruct one another, and not to kill one another. Would that war were the only persecution which the arts experience ! I groan at seeing that poor Abbé Langlet shut up at seventy in the Bastille, after having given us a good method of studying history, and some excellent chronological tables. Who then are the Vandals who have imagined that the printing of the sixth volume of Supplements to the history of that good citizen, President de Thou, was a crime of state ? What a climax of barbarity, and what an extreme of littleness, not to permit us to print books which explain Newton, and which say that the reveries of Descartes are reveries !

"I prefer the abuse of liberty practised in Holland of printing one's thoughts, to that slavery to which they wish to reduce the human mind in France. If they go on in this train, what will remain to us but the remembrance of the glory of the beautiful age of Louis XIV. ?

"This doctrine might make me desire to establish myself in the country where I now am. Having nothing to aspire to here, I should have nothing to complain of. I should live tranquil, and wish France more brilliant days.

"There are here some very estimable men. The Hague is a delicious place in summer, and liberty renders the winters less rude. I love to see the rulers of the state plain citizens. There are parties here, it is true, as there must be in a republic ; but the spirit of party detracts nothing from the love of country : I see great men opposed to great men.

"I am very glad, for the honor of poetry, that there is a poet here" (Van Haren) "who has helped to procure succors for the queen of Hungary, and that the trumpet of war has been the very humble servant of the lyre of Apollo. I see, on the other hand, with not less admiration, one of the principal members of the government, who is of the peace party, walking in the streets unattended, inhabiting a house fit for those Roman consuls who cooked their own vegetables, spent scarcely two thousand florins a year upon themselves, and gave more than twenty thousand to indigent families.

"These great examples escape most travellers ; but are not such curiosities better worth seeing than the processions at Rome, the priests at the Capitol, and the miracle of St. Januarius ? Men of worth, men of genius, — these are my miracles !

"This government would please you infinitely, even with the faults that are inseparable from it. It is wholly municipal, which is just that which you love. Besides, the Hague is the place of news and of

books. It is properly the city of ambassadors, whose society is always very useful to one who wishes to instruct himself. You see them all here in one day. They go out, they return home ; every street is a promenade ; you can show yourself or remain in privacy, just as you like. It is Fontainebleau with no court to make."

A volume of letters in this tone could be selected from his correspondence. Perhaps we could find a thousand explosions like the following : " What a dog of a country is France, where a man cannot utter what he thinks ! They speak their mind in England, — what harm comes of it ? Does the liberty of thinking hinder the English from being masters on land and sea ? Ah, French ! French ! in v you drive out the Jesuits. You are still only half men ! " When we consider that Voltaire was in correspondence with all the influential men and women of his time, that his letters, from the celebrity of their author, were handed about, preserved, and very frequently printed, we may form some estimate of their effect upon public opinion during the half-century preceding the Revolution.

Voltaire failed not to notice, what the people of the United States have frequently had to deplore, the inconsistencies of the English character. The witty Frenchman observed the contradictions of English history, but he was philosopher enough to know that inconsistency is not English, but human. " Divide the human race," he says, " into twenty parts. Nineteen of them are composed of those who labor with their hands, and who will never know that there has been such a man as Locke in the world. In the remaining twentieth part how few there are that read ! and among those who read, there are twenty who read romances to one who studies philosophy. The number of people who think is exceedingly small." While this description of the human race remains substantially true, let us never be surprised at inconsistencies in the acts or the feelings of a nation.